March on Washington Movement flyer, ca. 1941. A. Philip Randolph formed a March on Washington Committee (MOWC) to urge 10,000 blacks to "march on Washington for jobs in national defense and equal integration in the fighting forces." Scheduled for July 1, 1941, the threatened mass protest forced President Franklin Delano Roosevelt to issue Executive Order 8802 on June 25, banning racially discriminatory employment in defense industries and the federal government, and creating the wartime Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC) to investigate complaints. Randolph "postponed" the march on June 28 via radio. The George Meany Memorial Archives/N986.

Mary Benson Takes a Stand on Behalf of President Abraham Lincoln

Kahlil Chism, National Archives and Records Administration

This article relates the history of how a little-known American patriot named Mary Benson took a stand. In November 1864, Mrs. Benson accidentally discovered a plot to assassinate President Abraham Lincoln. Although she immediately reported the information to the proper authorities, Lincoln was assassinated anyway, five months later. Following the President's death, Mrs. Benson went on to testify at the trial of the Lincoln conspirators; as a result of her decision to stand up for what she thought was right, Mrs. Benson suffered great personal danger and financial loss.

Mary Benson's story provides an excellent opportunity for teachers to introduce their students to the 2006 National History Day theme, Taking a Stand in History: People, Ideas and Events. *Teachers might use Mrs. Benson as an example of how an ordinary individual might be a good topic for a National History Day project. They also might use Benson's experiences as the basis for class discussion of the results of taking a stand, both in terms of how her actions affected – or did not affect – President Lincoln and the United States, and in terms of how she personally was affected by her choices and actions.—*EDITOR

Mary Benson began her letter to the Judge Advocate General of the U. S. Army in a straightforward manner: "I beg to make the following statement showing why I think I am entitled to a remuneration."[1] Written on July 3, 1867, a little more than two years after President Abraham Lincoln's assassination, Mrs. Benson's letter summarized the fateful day that she had a near-encounter with John Wilkes Booth, described the courageous role she played in attempting to save the president's life, and detailed what she believed to be the personal price she paid for taking the witness stand against Lincoln's conspirators.

That letter is the first of three documents featured in this article. The second document is a letter from General Joseph Holt, Judge Advocate of the Army, to Secretary of War Edwin Stanton. In his letter, General Holt summarized Mary Benson's financial request while providing further details of her character and interactions with the Bureau of Military Justice. The third document is the envelope which contained the letters originally found by Mrs. Benson; the envelope would come to earn an interesting endorsement on the outside from President Lincoln. Together, these documents provide a view into this pivotal period in Mrs. Benson's life, a period in which she chose to take a stand for what she believed was right, regardless of the consequences.

In November 1864, Mary Benson was living in Harlem, New York. Mrs. Benson was a widow (formerly Mrs. Mary Hudspeth), a mother of four children, and the sole proprietor of a small business. During the second week of that month, she boarded the Third Avenue train with her young daughter, en route to her broker's office to deposit some gold and to the Nassau Street Post Office to mail some correspondence. Once aboard the train, the excited conversation taking

[1] Mary Benson to Joseph Holt, Judge Advocate General of the U.S. Army; July 3, 1867. RG 110, Provost Marshal General's Bureau (Civil War), Secret Service Accounts, Entry 95, 1867–1870 and Misc. National Archives.

place between two men seated nearby caught her attention—particularly when she noticed that one of the men appeared to be wearing a phony mustache. Benson also observed the two men exchanging letters and overheard one of them remark to the other that "he would leave for Washington the day after to-morrow."[2] According to testimony that she would later give at the May 1865 Lincoln conspiracy trial, "one of them left about Twenty-sixth or Twenty-seventh Street; and, as he left, I moved up into his place: the car was crowded."[3]

A short time after both men had left the train, Mary Benson's daughter tugged at her dress and handed her mother an envelope, which Mrs. Benson assumed she had dropped. She placed the envelope in her purse and exited the train. It was not until they were at the broker's office that Mrs. Benson realized the small envelope her daughter had handed her and the two letters it contained were not her own. Referring to that day on the train, and to those two letters, she wrote to Holt, "I found the letters relating to the assassination in New York City Nov 1864."[4] As she would later explain on the witness stand during the conspiracy trial, she was certain that the letters she found in her possession belonged to the men from the train, "because I saw them exchange letters, and there was no one else at that seat."[5] Once Mary Benson read one of the letters, she immediately realized that President Lincoln's life was in danger and determined that she had to take action.[6] As she expressed to Holt, "My only feeling was that I had it in my power to save the Presidents [sic] life and I would do so if possible at any personal risk."[7]

The envelope and the two letters contained therein, are some of the earliest known pieces of evidence of the plot to assassinate President Lincoln. Special Judge Advocate John Bingham's summation in the Lincoln assassination conspiracy trial states that, "the letter was delivered to Mr. Lincoln, who considered it important enough to indorse [sic] it with the word 'Assassination,' and file it in his office, where it was found after the commission of this crime, and brought into this Court to bear witness against his assassins."[8]

On April 14, 1865—five months and three days after Mary Benson delivered the assassination letter to the U. S. War Department—John Wilkes Booth assassinated President Lincoln

[2] Witness Stand Testimony of Mrs. Mary Hudspeth, May 12, 1865. Investigation and Trial Papers Relating to the Assassination of President Lincoln; Proceedings of the Court-martial, May 9–15, 1865; National Archives and Records Administration, M599, Roll 8.

[3] Ibid.

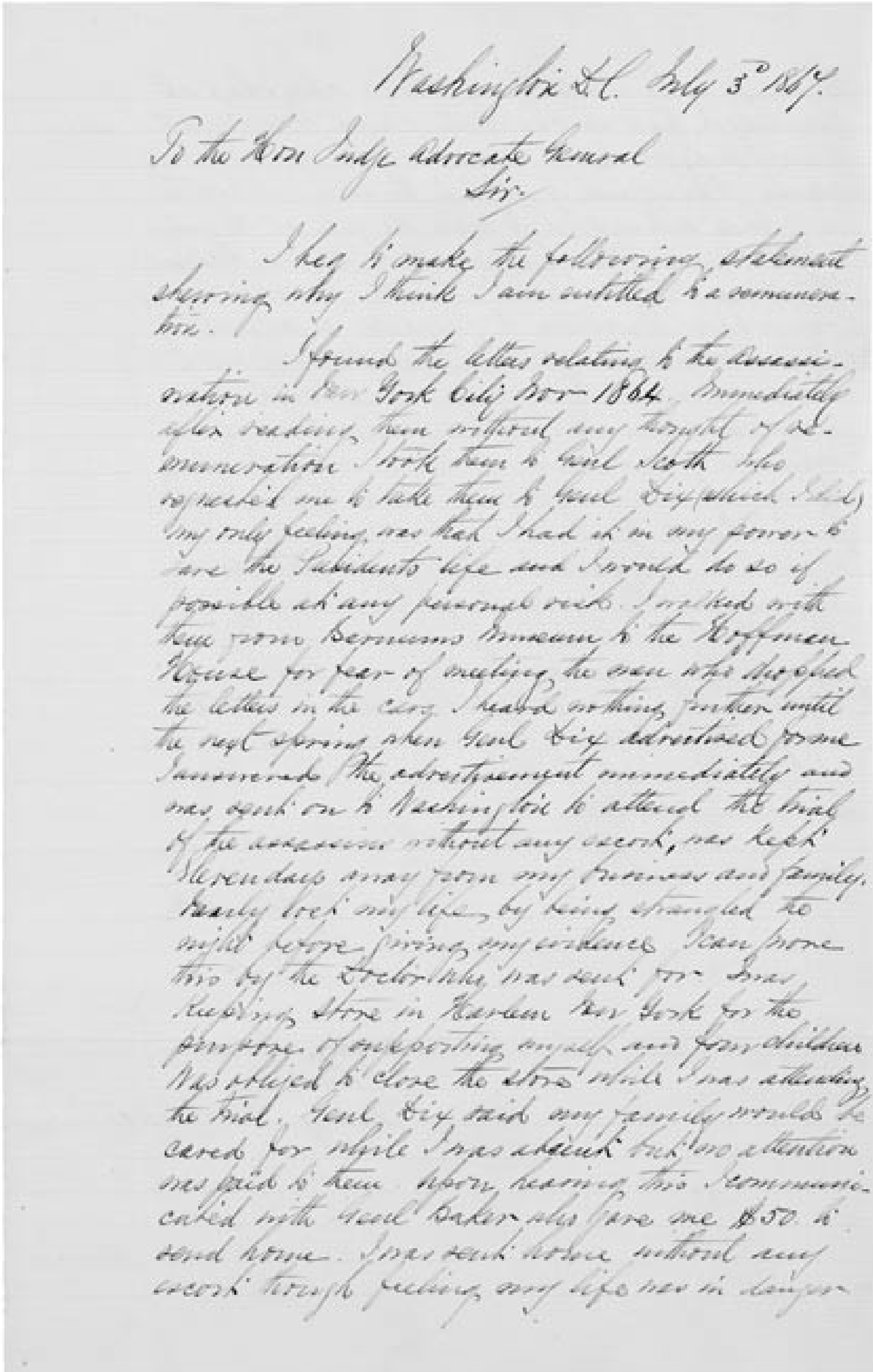
[4] Mary Benson to Joseph Holt, Judge Advocate General of the U.S. Army; July 3, 1867. RG 110, Provost Marshal General's Bureau (Civil War), Secret Service Accounts, Entry 95, 1867–1870 and Misc. National Archives.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Charles Selby letter to Louis (John Wilkes Booth), 1864; Investigation and Trial Papers Relating to the Assassination of President Lincoln, Argument of John A. Bingham and Exhibits Used in the Court-martial. M599, Roll 15. Note: John Wilkes Booth, who is addressed as "Louis" in a letter from Charles Selby, is told, among other things, that "Abe must die, and now. You can choose your weapons — the cup, the knife, the bullet."

[7] Mary Benson to Joseph Holt.

[8] Investigation and Trial Papers Relating to the Assassination of President Lincoln, Argument of John A. Bingham and Exhibits Used in the Court-martial. M599, Roll 15.



Washington D.C. July 3rd 1867.

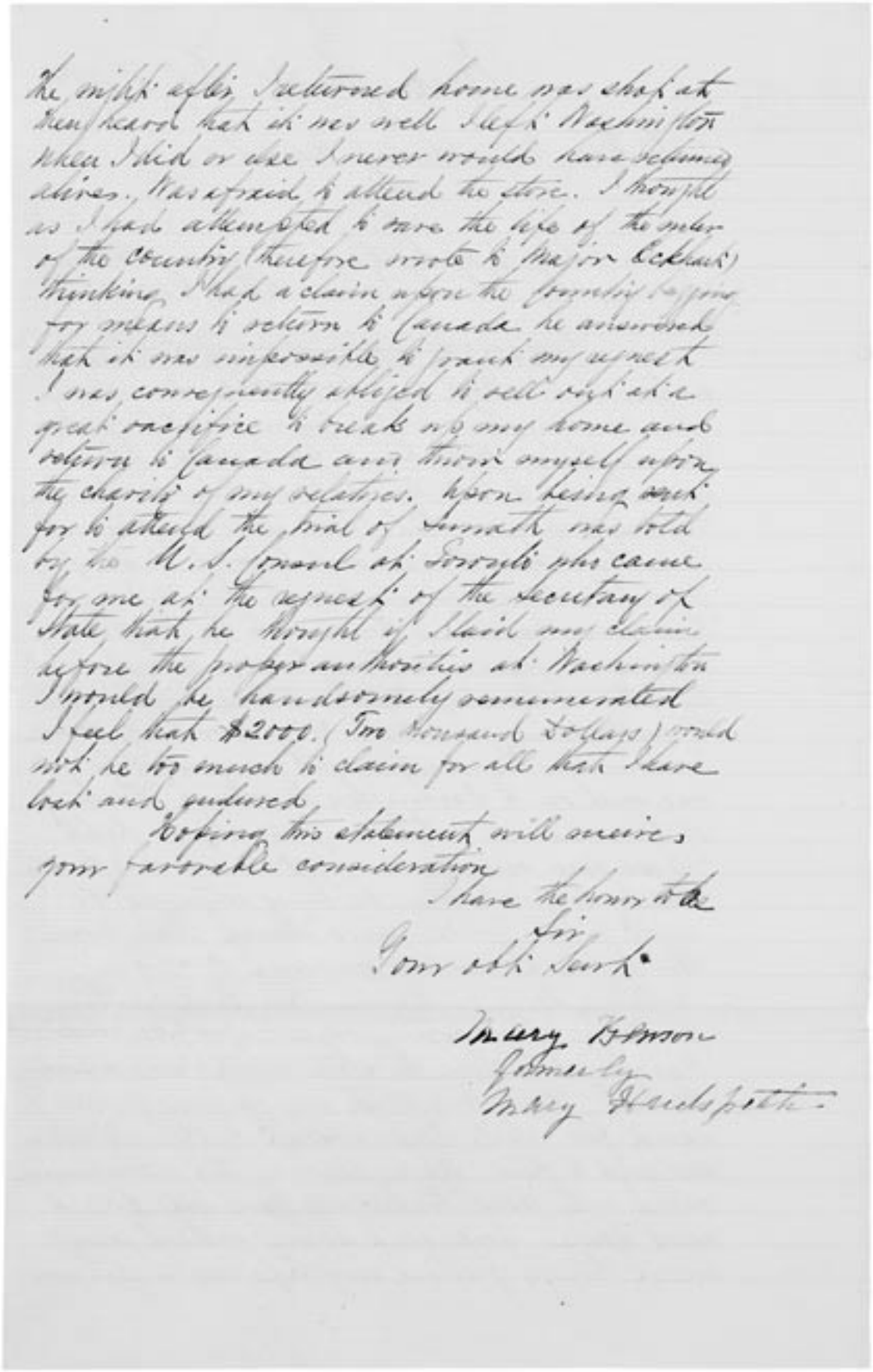
To the Hon Judge Advocate General

Sir:

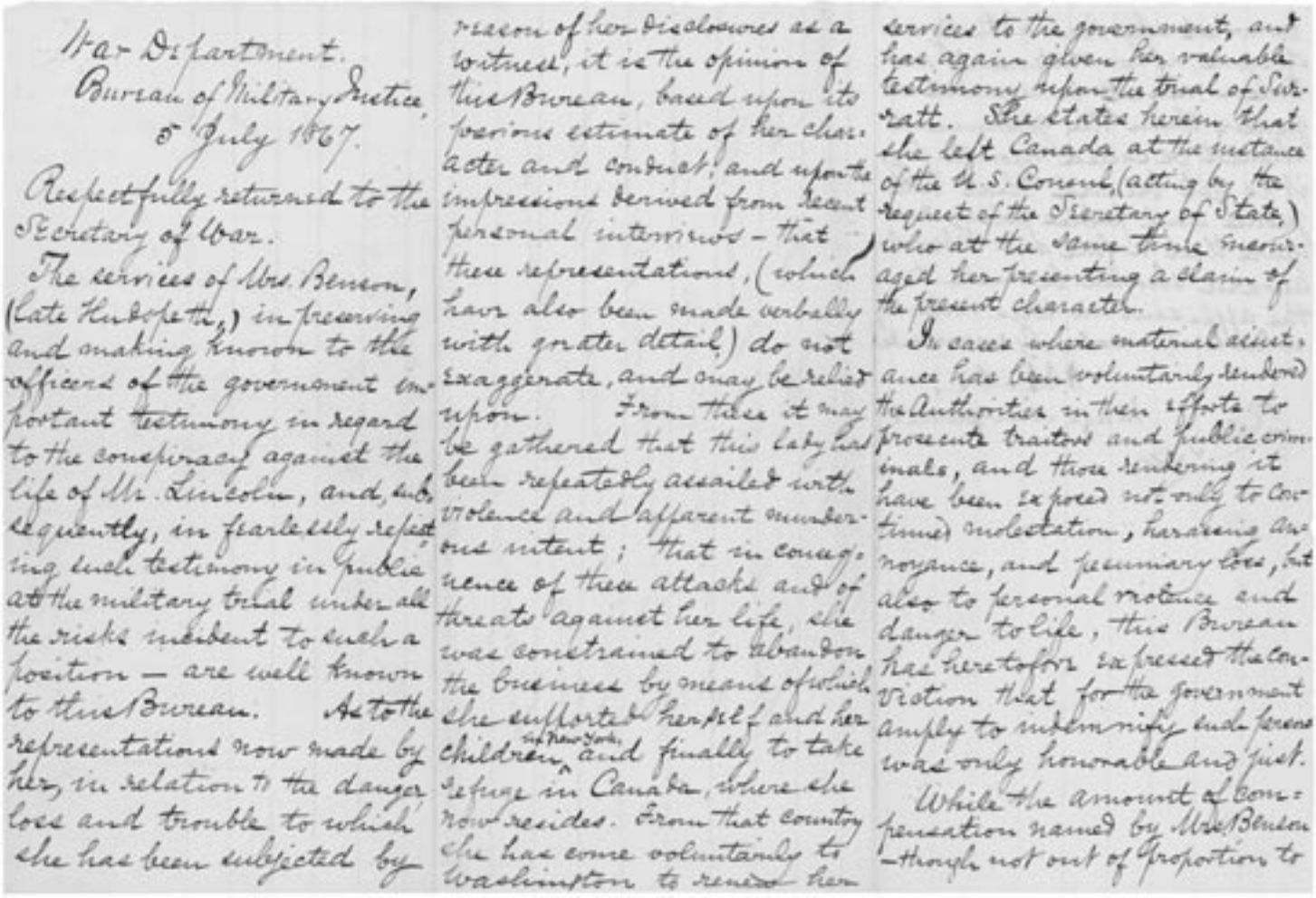
I beg to make the following statement showing why I think I am entitled to a remuneration.

I found the letters relating to the assassination in New York City Nov 1864. Immediately after reading them without any thought of remuneration I took them to Genl Scott who requested me to take them to Genl Dix (which I did) my only feeling was that I had it in my power to save the Presidents life and I would do so if possible at any personal risk. I walked with them from Barnums Museum to the Hoffman House for fear of meeting the man who dropped the letters in the car. I heard nothing further until the next spring when Genl Dix advertised for me I answered the advertisement immediately and was sent on to Washington to attend the trial of the assassins without any escort, was kept Eleven days away from my business and family. nearly lost my life by being strangled the night before giving my evidence. I was brought to by the Doctor who was sent for. I was keeping store in Harlem New York for the purpose of supporting myself and four children was obliged to close the store while I was attending the trial. Genl Dix said my family would be cared for while I was absent but no attention was paid to them. Upon hearing this I communicated with Genl Baker who gave me $50. to send home. I was sent home without any escort though feeling my life was in danger

Letter from Mary Benson to Gen. Joseph Holt, Judge Advocate of the Army, July 3, 1867, page 1 of 2. National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 110.



Letter from Mary Benson to Gen. Joseph Holt, Judge Advocate of the Army, July 3, 1867, page 2 of 2. National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 110.



War Department.
Bureau of Military Justice,
5th July 1867.

Respectfully returned to the Secretary of War.

The services of Mrs. Benson, (late Rudolphe,) in preserving and making known to the officers of the government important testimony in regard to the conspiracy against the life of Mr. Lincoln, and, subsequently, in fearlessly repeating such testimony in public at the military trial under all the risks incident to such a position — are well known to this Bureau. As to the representations now made by her, in relation to the danger, loss and trouble to which she has been subjected by reason of her disclosures as a witness, it is the opinion of this Bureau, based upon its previous estimate of her character and conduct, and upon impressions derived from recent personal interviews — that these representations, (which have also been made verbally with greater detail,) do not exaggerate, and may be relied upon. From these it may be gathered that this lady has been repeatedly assailed with violence and apparent murderous intent; that in consequence of these attacks and of threats against her life, she was constrained to abandon the business by means of which she supported herself and her children, in New York, and finally to take refuge in Canada, where she now resides. From that country she has come voluntarily to Washington to render her services to the government, and has again given her valuable testimony upon the trial of Surratt. She states herein that she left Canada at the instance of the U. S. Consul, (acting by the request of the Secretary of State,) who at the same time encouraged her presenting a claim of the present character.

In cases where material assistance has been voluntarily rendered the Authorities in their efforts to prosecute traitors and public criminals, and those rendering it have been exposed not only to continued molestation, harassing annoyance, and pecuniary loss, but also to personal violence and danger to life, this Bureau has heretofore expressed the conviction that for the government amply to indemnify such persons was only honorable and just.

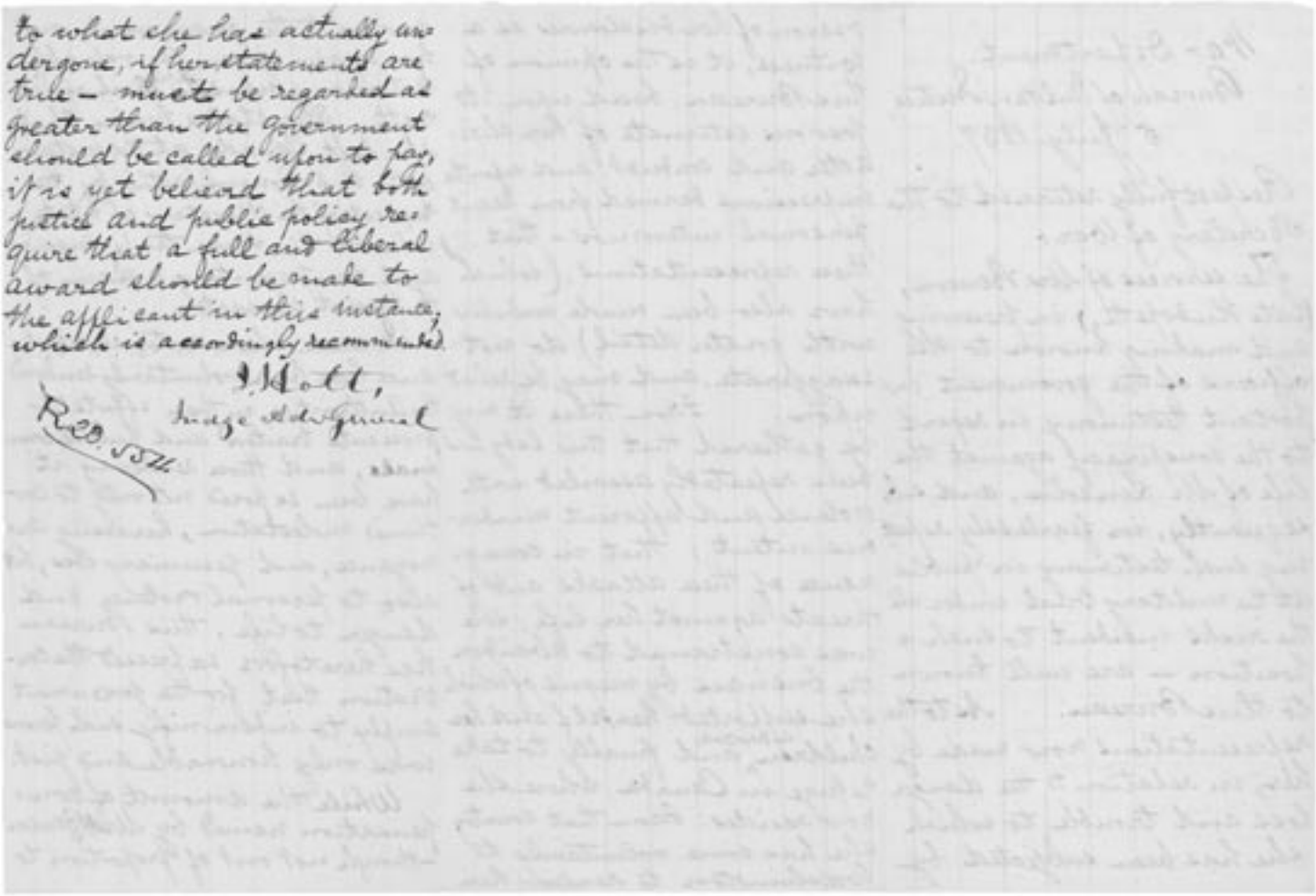
While the amount of compensation named by Mrs Benson — though not out of proportion to

Letter supporting Mary Benson's request for compensation, from Gen. Joseph Holt, Judge Advocate of the Army, to Edwin Stanton, Secretary of War, July 5, 1867, page 1 of 2. National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 110.

at Ford's Theatre, in Washington, D.C., during a performance of a play titled *Our American Cousin*. The next month, General John A. Dix—the same officer to whom Mrs. Benson had handed the letters the day she found them—requested her presence in Washington, D.C., to testify at the conspiracy trial.

Mary Benson's decision to take a stand cost her a great deal, monetarily and otherwise. In her 1867 letter, she justified her request for reimbursement by outlining the physical threats and financial losses she had experienced. She explained that she "was sent on to Washington to attend the trial of the assassins without any escort."[9] In order to make the trip, Mrs. Benson had to close down her business for several days, causing her financial hardship. Once she arrived in Washington, D.C., someone attempted to strangle her the night before she was to give her testimony, and she was shot at when she went back home to Harlem, New York. Fearing for her life, Mrs. Benson sold her business — at a significant financial loss, according to her letter — and relocated her family to Canada. In spite of all that she had already suffered, Mary Benson ventured back to Washington, D.C. two years later, in June 1867, again at her own expense, to testify

[9] Ibid.


to what she has actually undergone, if her statements are true – must be regarded as greater than the Government should be called upon to pay, if is yet believed that both justice and public policy require that a full and liberal award should be make to the applicant in this instance, which is accordingly recommended.

J. Holt,
Judge Adv. General

Rec'd 1867

Letter supporting Mary Benson's request for compensation, from Gen. Joseph Holt, Judge Advocate of the Army, to Edwin Stanton, Secretary of War, July 5, 1867, page 2 of 2. National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 110.

at the trial of conspirator John Surratt.[10] It was for all of the above-mentioned reasons that Mrs. Benson closed her July 3, 1867 letter to General Holt by stating, "I feel that $2000. (Two thousand Dollars) would not be too much to claim for all that I have lost and endured."[11]

Just three days after Mary Benson drafted her letter, General Holt wrote a letter of his own to the U. S. Secretary of War, restating Mrs. Benson's claims. Holt acknowledged that she had provided "important testimony in regard to the conspiracy against the life of Mr. Lincoln" and noted that "in fearlessly repeating such testimony in public at the military trial under all the risks incident to such a position," she had come to be well-known among officials at the Bureau of Military Justice.[12] "It is the opinion of this Bureau, based upon its previous estimate of her character and conduct," Holt wrote in confirmation of Mary Benson's story, "that these

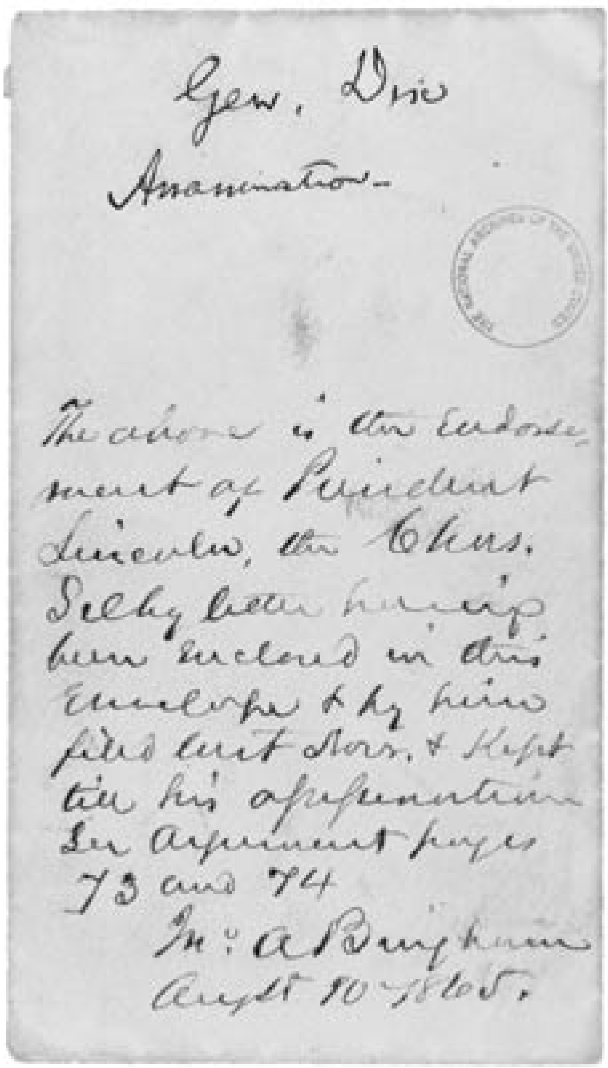
[10] John Surratt, the youngest son of Mary Surratt, was one of the conspirators in league with John Wilkes Booth. After the assassination, the subsequent conspiracy trial and the hanging of his mother, John fled to England, escaping capture until June 1867. John Surratt was tried in a civilian court in Washington, D.C., from June 17–July 16, 1867, and was released in August 1867 after the jury was unable to reach a verdict.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Joseph Holt to the Secretary of War, War Department, Bureau of Military Justice; July 5, 1867. RG 110, Provost Marshal General's Bureau (Civil War), Secret Service Accounts, Entry 95, 1867–1870 and Misc. National Archives.

representations…do not exaggerate, and may be relied upon."[13] After noting that she had to "take refuge in Canada," Holt emphasized that "she has come voluntarily to Washington to renew her services to the government, and has again given her valuable testimony upon the trial of Surratt."[14] He closed his letter with a recommendation that Mrs. Benson's request for remuneration be granted. Rather than the $2,000 she requested, Mary Benson eventually received $500, "for services rendered in giving important information in regard to the conspiracy against the life of President Lincoln, and for her expenses."[15]

Kahlil Chism is an Education Specialist in the Department of Museum Programs, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. He assists in presenting a workshops, professional development seminars, and videoconferences to a national audience of students, teachers, and administrators, K-16. Much of his work focuses on the critical analysis and effective use of primary source materials in the nation's classrooms.



President Abraham Lincoln wrote the word "Assassination" on this envelope (left), which contained the two letters found by Mary Benson on a New York City train in 1864. National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 110.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Joseph Holt to the Secretary of War, War Department, Bureau of Military Justice; July 5, 1867. RG 110, Provost Marshal General's Bureau (Civil War), Secret Service Accounts, Entry 95, 1867–1870 and Misc. National Archives.

[15] Payment to Mary Benson; September 30, 1867. RG 110, Provost Marshal General's Bureau (Civil War), Secret Service Accounts, Entry 95, 1867–1870 and Misc. National Archives.

Teaching Activity

Mary Benson's story provides an excellent lead-in to a class discussion of this year's NHD theme *Taking A Stand in History.* Teachers might have their students read the article and examine the documents, and then explore the following questions:

- What circumstances led Mary Benson to take a stand? Why did she report what she had found? What in the letters helps you understand her thinking and motivation?

- In what sense(s) did Mrs. Benson take a stand? How many times did she take a stand? What risks did she take by taking a stand ? Did she realize the consequences before she took each stand? Why do you believe she was willing to take those risks? What in the letters helps you answer these questions?

- What effect, if any, did Mrs. Benson's stand have on history? On President Lincoln? On the country? Do you think the price she paid for her actions was worth it?

- Have you ever been in similar situations where you have felt you had to take a stand? What put you into those situations? What sorts of risks did you face when you took a stand? When did you realize there were costs? Looking back, what impact did your actions have? Would you have made the same choices if you had known in advance what might happen?

- Who else can you think of who has taken a stand in history? What circumstances placed them in the position of standing up for what they believed? What motivated them? What consequences, if any, did they face? What broader impact did their actions have? Would they be a good subject for a National History Day project, and why or why not?

Discovering a Piece of Forgotten History: Finding Mary Benson

Conducting research at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) is not like conducting research at a library. The National Archives' billions of records in a variety of media are arranged by numbered "record groups" rather than by topic, with each record group comprising the records of a single major U.S. government entity such as a bureau or independent agency. The records from one entity are kept distinct from those of another, and they are arranged in the Archives however they were filed when still in active use by their parent agency.

Currently, there are more than 500 record groups. The number assigned to a record group reflects the order in which it was established by the National Archives. As a result, records dealing with a particular person or topic may be found in several record groups and, perhaps reside in several different locations. While this may seem like a disadvantage in conducting research at the National Archives, one possible bonus is that a researcher may come across undiscovered, little-used, or long-forgotten records. Such was the case with three documents from the 1860s relating to a woman named Mary Benson.

In January, 2003, I was searching for materials related to spying during the Civil War era, for use in a National Archive's permanent exhibit, *The Public Vaults.* My only criteria were that the documents be one or two pages in length, deal with spying, and be visually appealing. While searching through Record Group 110, records of the Provost Marshall General's Bureau, I found a War Department envelope with the following handwritten note on the outside: "Mary Benson Hudspeth Sept. 30, 1867 $500." That envelope contained another envelope, which held four letters. Within thirty seconds of reading Mary Benson's letter to General Holt, I realized that while what I was holding something unrelated to my research topic, it was certainly intriguing.

Having little detailed knowledge of the specifics of President Abraham Lincoln's assassination and the role this woman may have played in trying to thwart an assassination or in testifying at subsequent trials, I did what any researcher at the National Archives should do: I consulted with the Archivist whose specialty was that particular record group. Though he was unaware of Mary Benson, he told me that hundreds of witnesses testified at the Lincoln conspiracy trials. He suggested that I contact a Lincoln expert at the Surratt House Museum (the country home of Mary Surratt, first woman to be executed by the United States government after she was found guilty of conspiring with John Wilkes Booth to assassinate Abraham Lincoln).

After I contacted the museum and told them about the records I found in the National Archives, they sent me a full transcript of Benson's trial testimony. The "transcript" actually consisted of four typed pages from one of only two published copies of the trial testimony. The information contained in the letters, plus what I could deduce from the transcript, led me to further research concerning the Lincoln conspiracy trial, this time in the National Archive's microfilm holdings.

Ultimately, I constructed a timeline of events leading up to Lincoln's assassination, and placed Mary Benson and her interactions and correspondence with the War Department into proper context. One result is the article which appears here, "Mary Benson Takes a Stand on Behalf of President Abraham Lincoln." Perhaps my experience and this article will inspire you to visit your nearest National Archives facility, and maybe you, too, will discover history anew.

—Kahlil G. Chism

One of the World's First International Humanitarian Movements: Taking a Stand Against Exploitation in the Congo

Rebecca Fishburne, Teacher, Maryland

One of the greatest challenges facing history and social studies teachers is to interest their students in studying the past. A well-written book, an exciting movie or documentary, or a class trip to a local museum can begin to engage students. Once something like that has captured their students' imaginations, teachers then have a responsibility to instruct their students to go beyond that one source; this presents teachers with a marvelous opportunity to cultivate students' research and analytical skills, as well as to help them develop a love of history.

This article features one such source that might attract students to history: a narrative history of the Belgian Congo in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. After briefly summarizing King Leopold of Belgium's involvement in the Congo and listing several individuals who would be possible subjects for a 2006 National History Day project related to the theme of Taking a Stand in History, *the essay suggests several teaching activities that build on* King Leopold's Ghost. *While each of the exercises takes the book as its starting point, students would have to evaluate this source and use it in conjunction with a variety of other materials.—*EDITOR

For decades, teachers have used Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899) in literature classes to introduce students to issues of morality, civilization, and the dark side of human nature. The book seems too violent and too negative for the situations described to be real; in fact, however, *Heart of Darkness* is a work of historical fiction and thus is based on actual events. In *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism, in Colonial Africa* (1998), author Adam Hochschild demonstrates quite convincingly that *Heart of Darkness* was Conrad's only slightly fictionalized account of things he had personally witnessed in the Belgian Congo in 1890.

As an extensively researched, comprehensive, and gripping account of the history of the Belgian Congo, *King Leopold's Ghost* can help students generate ideas for National History Day projects in any year; however, it is particularly suited to helping them select topics related to this year's theme, *Taking a Stand in History.* The book would also make an excellent foundation for classroom lessons about African history, colonialism, and imperialism; the history of 19th century Europe; or the development of international humanitarian movements. (The book's length—more than 350 pages—and subject matter, plus the explicit nature of photographs and information it contains, make it most appropriate for use with older high school students.)

Historical Background

The Belgian Congo

By the late 1800s, several European countries had set their sights on building great empires in Africa. Although European exploration of the African coast had been going on for centuries, much of Africa's interior remained uncharted. Most foreigners saw central Africa as the "Dark Continent," offering little of economic value and not worth the hardship and expense to warrant

further exploration. King Leopold of Belgium desperately wanted to acquire colonies, though, and he believed—or hoped—that the African interior might bring him the power, wealth, and prestige that he desired.

Hochschild demonstrates how King Leopold carefully crafted an effective public relations campaign designed to portray himself as a great humanitarian. It soon seemed only logical that Belgium—or more accurately, Leopold personally—should explore, colonize, and control the interior of Africa. One of Leopold's first efforts towards building an empire was to host an 1876 European conference that resulted in the creation of the International African Association, a scholarly and scientific organization. Soon after, Leopold started another organization, the International Association of the Congo, as an ostensibly philanthropic entity. By forming such organizations, Leopold built a reputation for himself and his country: the world came to believe that Leopold and Belgium were concerned about the welfare of Africa and its people.

Leopold hired Henry Stanley (the same Stanley who found Dr. Livingston in Africa several years earlier) to build a road deep into the interior of a vast territory that would come to be called "the Congo." The 1881 completion of the road allowed easier access to—and greater exploitation of—central Africa. Once he could reach the territory that so interested him, Leopold needed international recognition of his claims. At a conference in Berlin, on November 15, 1884, he gained that recognition. He convinced the other delegates that placing him, the leader of a small and insignificant country, in the position of "protector" of the Congo would help maintain the balance of power between England, France, and Germany, then the most influential European countries with African colonies. Furthermore, he assured them that, as a "humanitarian" ruler, he would ensure free trade in the region. In spite of the fact that Belgium was a country no bigger than the state of West Virginia that lacked any previous colonial experience, the Berlin conference granted King Leopold control over a huge portion of the African continent.

For more than a decade, Leopold continued to tell Europe and the United States about his good deeds and humanitarian efforts in Africa. Meanwhile, he began to build a huge personal fortune in the Congo, initially based on ivory and then, after 1890, on the harvest and exportation of rubber. In contrast to the world's perceptions of conditions in the Congo, the means used to extract these resources were brutal and inhumane. Hochschild shows that, for a while, Leopold was able to maintain the image he had worked so hard to create. Eventually, though, the very same opening of the Congo to exploitation also made it more accessible to newcomers who saw the true situation, and, in at least a few cases, reported what they had seen.

The Reformers

Joseph Conrad was perhaps the most famous individual who wrote or spoke about the real nature of Belgian imperialism in the Congo. He took his stand by writing a novel, *Heart of*

Darkness. In *King Leopold's Ghost,* Hochschild presents several less-widely known individuals who more directly expressed their shock and opposition:

- In 1890, African-American journalist **George Washington Williams** traveled to the Congo Free State. Horrified by what he saw, he became the first to protest conditions, in an "Open Letter to his Serene Majesty Leopold II, King of the Belgians and Sovereign of the Independent State of Congo, by Colonel the Honorable Geo. W. Williams, of the United States of America."
- **William Sheppard**, an African-American missionary, spent several decades in the Congo. After observing horrendous treatment of the African people, he became an outspoken critic in letters and magazine articles. On periodic visits back to the United States, he spoke out by delivering lectures about conditions in the Congo.
- While working as a clerk for a shipping company that ran regular trips between Europe and the Congo, **Edmund Dean Morel** recognized irregularities in the financial records that indicated the use of slave labor in the Congo. Once he learned what was happening in the Congo, he became one of the most vocal critics. In 1901, he left his job to dedicate himself full-time to exposing the evils of Leopold's Congo.
- **Roger Casement** spent many years in Africa working as a consul with the British Foreign Office. He reported back to the British government on conditions in the Congo.
- In 1904, Morel, Casement, and several other individuals formed the **Congo Reform Association** to work towards stopping abuses in the Belgian Congo.

For each of these individuals, Hochschild outlines their lives and their involvement in the cause. The reader learns about each man's background, personality, experiences prior to going to the Congo, how he came to learn about the exploitation occurring there, and how and why he took his stand. Hochschild looks at the pressures that might have discouraged these individuals from speaking out, and the support systems that evolved. He thoroughly explores the substantial "costs" each man faced as a result of taking a stand. Lastly, Hochschild assesses the effectiveness of their actions. Conrad, Williams, Morel, Casement, or the Congo Reform Association would each make an excellent subject for a 2006 National History Day project.

Connecting with the Curriculum

The scope of *King Leopold's Ghost* is so broad that it could be used in several different history courses. The book could be used in its entirety for an African History class. Relying on chapters or selected pages, teachers of 19th century European history might draw upon Hochschild's discussions of Belgian history or interactions between European leaders at home and in Africa. The book also offers interesting glimpses into relations between the U.S., Europe, and Africa, and into race relations within the United States in mid-to-late 19th century.

Interdisciplinary Connections

English/Literature: Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, used in conjunction with Hochschild's discussion of Conrad and his novel, would give students an excellent opportunity to explore how authors interweave fact and story in historical fiction.

Advertising/Media: Teachers might have students read sections of *King Leopold's Ghost* pertaining to King Leopold's self-promotion efforts, compare Leopold's approaches and results to those of a current media campaign, and look at how image compares to reality in both.

Psychology: Hochschild develops extended biographies of a number of individuals, which teachers might use to have students look at motivation or personality development.

Anthropology: Students might compare and contrast world views held by different individuals and groups of people discussed in *King Leopold's Ghost.*

Teaching Activities

Research/Writing: Teachers can use *King Leopold's Ghost* as a source of topics for student research papers, and as the foundation for educating students about how to conduct research and write research papers. With its thorough end notes and extensive bibliography, the book can be used as an effective tool to teach about the differences between and uses of primary and secondary sources, and how to appropriately credit and cite sources.

- Teachers might give students a list of a dozen or more narrow topics for their papers, and assign each topic to one or two students so that together, the class will cover the entire list.
- Teachers could start by having students research within the book itself. Using the Table of Contents and the index, students could locate relevant pages for their topic. Then, they could write a short summary of the information Hochschild presents on their topic.
- Educators could next have the students research other sources, starting by discussing Hochschild's bibliography and research. What kinds of sources did he use? Was it balanced? Was it comprehensive? How might the students use his bibliography in their own research? What aspects of his research might they be able to do for this paper, and what steps might they take in their research that he did not (i.e., using the Internet)?
- Then, teachers could turn the students loose to do their own research. Students would be expected to examine a variety of other sources. As they read, they should compare and contrast what other sources say about the people, events, and conditions portrayed by Hochschild—and this analysis should appear as part of their final research papers.
- As students get ready to write their papers, teachers could teach lessons about plagiarism, specifically dealing with how and when to cite sources. For example, students could look at Hochschild's endnotes. When did he think a note was required? Did he

use them just for direct quotes or did he sometimes cite others' ideas expressed in his own words? The students could review the initial summary they wrote about their individual topics. How close were their words to Hochschild's? Perhaps it would be useful to have students revise the summaries at this point, now that they have had the lesson on plagiarism. This section of the project could be concluded by having students draft footnotes for their summaries.

King Leopold's Ghost might also serve as an example for other aspects of a writing assignment. Hochschild develops a clear thesis for the book as a whole, and for individual chapters or sections. Teachers could help students identify his thesis statements, and examine how he words them. Another approach would be to have the class examine how the book or chapters are structured, and consider how they might apply what they see to their own papers.

Perspective: Teachers might assign students one or more chapters to read, and give out a handout summarizing the chronology of key events. Then, in a class discussion, students should be encouraged to reflect on and react to the events described. Teachers can help students explore their beliefs, values, and cultural mores that may have generated those reactions. Next, students could think about the people Hochschild described. It might be King Leopold, or Henry Stanley, or George Washington Williams, or a group of African villagers, depending on the chapter. How do students think those individuals would have reacted to what was occurring? What does the chapter reveal about how their beliefs, values, cultural mores, or experiences helped shape their thoughts and reactions?

A teacher might build on the class discussion by having students write an opinion or argument paper, or research how other authors addressed the same event or situation. Alternatively, students could give oral reports, create characters and write and deliver speeches that the individuals might have given, hold a class debate, or write and perform a short play. In preparation for any of these assignments, students should consider how to effectively use evidence to support arguments or presentations.

Media: Hochschild claims that Leopold used media and public relations very effectively to mold public opinion, and that he was one of the first to do so in this manner. "The media" meant very different things to Leopold than it does today. Students could compare the media then versus today, or compare Leopold's public relations efforts and their results to recent media coverage and world response to the current situation in central Africa. Another option would be to use this book as part of a study of the history of advertising and media over the last 150 years. Students might look at the different technologies involved, message content, effectiveness of campaigns, and what competing sources of information were or are available.

Historical Comparison: Although he does not dwell on it, Hochschild mentions that Leopold's Congo was not unique for its time. Other European countries similarly exploited the native populations of their African colonies. Nor was this kind of behavior limited to African

colonialism; after his posting in Africa, Roger Casement was sent to Brazil, where he found similar situations. Teachers might ask students to research conditions in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in other parts of Africa or elsewhere in the world, and compare what they find to Hochschild's description of the Congo. This research could be the basis for class discussion, research papers, oral reports, or other classroom activities.

Literature: Students could read fictionalized accounts of the Congo and analyze historical aspects of those sources based on Hochschild's descriptions and arguments in *King Leopold's Ghost*. In addition to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, teachers might introduce students to Mark Twain's *King Leopold's Soliloquy* and Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Crime of the Congo*. This exercise might be run as a class discussion or in small groups, and teachers might assign papers as the culmination for the project. This kind of activity offers an excellent opportunity for interdisciplinary English/history studies.

National History Day Projects

There are all sorts of ways a student might develop a National History Day project using *King Leopold's Ghost* as a starting point. Someone might expand on a class assignment like any of those described in the previous section of this essay. A class research paper could be turned into an NHD paper entry, a class debate could develop into a group performance, or a monologue might be refined for an individual performance entry. A student interested in aspects of media history might participate in the documentary or exhibit categories. Even if they don't use the book in classes, teachers might direct students to this source for possible NHD projects.

Conclusion

Hochschild's book might be that first source which leads a young person to a lifetime's fascination with the study of history. It can be used in many different ways: for class assignments, as independent reading for individual students, or as the initial building block for a National History Day project. It offers an exciting array of teaching possibilities. It opens the door to interdisciplinary studies and introduces students to the interconnectedness of different classes and subjects, such as marketing and history or literature and history. In addition, carefully-designed lessons can mine this single source for many lessons to help students develop research, analytical, and writing skills. *King Leopold's Ghost* is an excellent way to show students how just one source can lead them to discover a whole world of knowledge.

Bibliography

Hochschild, Adam. *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998.

Davidson, Basil. *Africa in History: Themes and Outlines.* New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995.

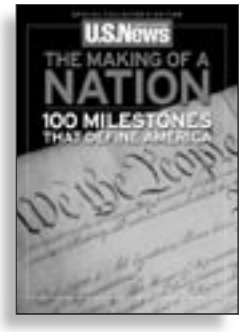
Edgerton, Robert B. *The Troubled Heart of Africa: A History of the Congo.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 2002.

Kennedy, Pagan. *Black Livingston: A True Tale of Adventure in the 19th Century Congo.* New York: Viking, 2002.

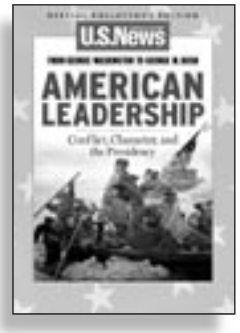
Mitchell, Angus. "New Light on The Heart of Darkness." *History Today* 49, no. 12 (December 1999): 20-27.

Rebecca Fishburne, who has been teaching middle and upper school at the Bullis School in Potomac, Maryland for the past eight years, is currently taking a break from teaching to raise her four children. She used NHD with her 9th grade students as part of a comprehensive writing program and as a way to emphasize the use of primary source documents in historical research and writing.

The excitement of history . . . revealed



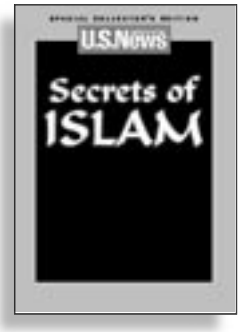
The Making of a Nation. Words matter—they can declare new nations, free slaves, end wars, and more. Discover how words, and the ideas behind them, built a powerful and wealthy country.



American Leadership. Americans have always hoped to see presidents with character, vision and determination. This study reveals the successes and disappointments of those who captured our nation's highest office.

The Ancient World. Greek civilization proved so influential in politics, philosophy, art, and science that its accomplishments remain to this day the bedrock of western thought. Take a journey to this ancient era.

Secrets of Islam. This timely special issue will help your students explore the culture and tradition of the religion practiced by one out of every five people in the world. It is an essential guide to the many faces of Islam.



U.S.News & WORLD REPORT

To order specials call

1-800-736-9623

PRICING: 5 copy minimum: 5-9 copies: $5.95 each; 10-34 copies: $4.95 each; 35+ copies: $3.95 each; Shipping & Handling $5.95 for first copy, $1 for each additional copy.

FOR EDUCATORS AND TEACHERS ONLY

The U.S. News Classroom Program

A total curriculum package at a price you can't beat

The **Classroom Program** brings current events, news analysis, and history into your class and right at your fingertips. Plus, *U.S. News* is a source you can trust. For the second time, the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press rated *U.S. News* the "**most credible print news source**."

U.S.News & WORLD REPORT CLASSROOM PROGRAM

For more information call

1-800-736-9623

or visit *www.usnewsclassroom.com*

Just some of the benefits

1. **Discounted** subscriptions for students delivered in bulk or to individual students
2. **FREE** Instructor's subscription
3. **FREE** online Teacher's Guide and quizzes
4. **FREE** access to exclusive U.S. News Classroom Web site
5. **FREE** U.S. News Tote Bag and *The Wit and Wisdom of the Presidents*

* Program minimums apply.

White House Tea and No Sympathy: The DePriest Incident

John Riley, White House Historical Association

*In June 1929, First Lady Lou Hoover invited the wives of U.S. Congressmen, including Mrs. Jesse DePriest, to tea at the White House. Mrs. DePriest was the wife of the first African-American elected to the U.S. Congress in the twentieth century, and her visit to the White House became quite controversial. Teachers might use this article as the foundation for lessons about American race relations, politics, or media of that era. Within the context of National History Day, the article could also be used in several different ways, for example, as the basis for discussion of the NHD theme for the year, critical analysis of sources, or research skills.—*EDITOR

Introduction

In the early summer of 1929, citizens in the nation's capital enjoyed reading about the White House activities of President Herbert Hoover and his wife, Lou Hoover, in their local newspaper. They learned that a "talking movie" was shown at the White House , that the president's pets had acquired silver-plated nametags, and that a policy had been implemented to reduce the number of handshakes the president had to endure during public receptions. By July, the Hoovers no doubt sorely missed such whimsical coverage, when it was replaced by reports criticizing Mrs. Hoover for inviting an African-American woman to attend a White House tea.

Ordinarily, the First Lady's activities would have been covered in the society news; in this case, however, Lou Hoover made front page headlines in newspapers across the country. Early in her husband's administration, Mrs. Hoover planned to invite the wives of U.S. Congressmen to the White House, but she faced a dilemma. For the first time in decades, and for the first time ever outside the South, an African-American man had been elected to the U.S. Congress. Should she invite his wife, Mrs. Oscar DePriest, to tea at the White House along with the wives of the other Congressmen? She decided to do so, and Mrs. DePriest accepted the invitation and did indeed visit the White House, igniting a firestorm that demonstrated the sensitive and symbolic nature of the White House, as well as the delicate state of race relations in America on the cusp of the Depression.

The Incident

Oscar DePriest was the first African-American elected as a U.S. Congressman since Reconstruction, and he was the first African-American ever elected to serve in the U.S. Congress from outside the South. A Republican from Chicago, DePriest began his term in March 1929, at the same time President Hoover started his term as president. It quickly became clear that a decision had to be made about what to do about Mrs. DePriest. While President and Mrs. Hoover tried to minimize political fallout, there does not seem to be any doubt that they would include Mrs. DePriest. It would be difficult to ignore White House traditions, so canceling the event was not really an option. Nor would the Hoovers snub Mrs. DePriest by excluding her.

Not since President Theodore Roosevelt invited African-American Booker T. Washington to a private White House dinner in 1901 had race relations touched the first family in such a personal way. President Roosevelt was severely criticized, particularly by the Southern press, for extending a dinner invitation to a Black man and thereby "degrading the White House." While some people praised Roosevelt for breaking a barrier, the widespread negative publicity convinced him not to offer such an invitation again. Subsequent presidents followed suit. Seemingly, it was more politically expedient to avoid controversy than to court it, but tradition and chance collided during the first year of Herbert Hoover's administration.

First Lady Lou Hoover. White House Historical Association (White House Collection).

Considering how potentially volatile the situation was, however, much thought and planning went into how to make the event as successful as possible and to minimize negative reaction. Years later, Irvin "Ike" Hoover (no relation to President Herbert Hoover), White House "chief usher"—supervisor of the White House household staff—described the incident in his published memoirs. He consulted with the First Lady's social secretary, who insisted that Mrs. DePriest be invited as a matter of protocol. The only similar situation he could remember was the Booker T. Washington dinner, and "precedents were sought, but none could be found that definitely applied" for planning the details of the event. The president's staff in the West Wing then discussed the upcoming event.

Finally, it was decided that the Congressional wives should be invited in four groups. Before the invitations were sent, Lou Hoover's social secretary visited with a small number of the women to identify those who would not be offended to be at the same social function

as Mrs. DePriest. They decided to invite Mrs. DePriest to the last of the four teas, for fear that doing otherwise might lead wives of Southern Congressman to boycott subsequent gatherings. One last preparation was needed: the morning of Mrs. DePriest's expected visit, White House security and doormen were alerted "to be careful when a colored lady should present herself and say she had an appointment with Mrs. Hoover, lest they create a scene by refusing her admittance."

On June 12, 1929, Mrs. Hoover received Mrs. DePriest and others in the White House Green Room. They then assembled for tea in the Red Room. Ike Hoover noted in his memoirs that "Mrs. DePriest conducted herself with perfect propriety. She really seemed the most composed one in the group." When she departed, there was "an admiration at the way she conducted herself" in a difficult situation.

Public reaction was less complimentary, however. Some southern newspaper editors accused Mrs. Hoover of "defiling" the White House. The Texas legislature went so far as to formally admonish her. President Hoover, in his memoirs, said that "the speeches of southern Senators and Congressmen… wounded [Mrs. Hoover] deeply." Mrs. Hoover's secretary, Ruth Fesler, later recalled that the first lady "stood her ground; she had done the right thing and she knew it."

Bibliography

Day, David S. "Herbert Hoover and Racial Politics: The DePriest Incident," *The Journal of Negro History* 65, no. 1 (Winter 1980): 6-17.

Hoover, Herbert. *The Memoirs of Herbert Hoover: The Cabinet and Presidency.* New York: The Macmillan Co., 1952.

Hoover, Irwin Hood. *Forty-Two Years in the White House.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1934.

Seale, William. *The President's House.* Washington, D.C.: White House Historical Association, 1986.

Young, Nancy Beck. *Lou Henry Hoover: Activist First Lady.* Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2004.

John P. Riley is Director of Education and Scholarship Programs at the White House Historical Association. He manages the creation of K-12 classroom resources, grant and fellowship programs, and scholarly seminars.

Teaching Activity #1: Critical Examination of Sources

Most secondary sources that mention the DePriest incident draw upon two published primary sources: memoirs by Ike Hoover and Herbert Hoover. These two accounts of the DePriest incident contradict one another in many specifics, as readers will see when they look at the excerpts shown on Handout #1. The differences between the two accounts, as well as the nature of the two texts, provide teachers with an excellent opportunity to teach students about analyzing sources.

Teachers might begin by having their students read this article, including the two excerpts. Then, either in class discussion or as a written exercise, teachers can ask students to analyze both the sources and the incident. The first step would be to have students examine the sources and their limitations. Memoirs typically need to be used very carefully, and these two are certainly no exception. As is often the case with memoirs, both were written long after the event originally took place. Ike Hoover's memoirs were published nearly five years later, and Herbert Hoover published his memoirs more than two decades later. Questions arise about the accuracy of either man's memories of the event. Although less time had elapsed, Ike Hoover's memoirs are even more problematic than the former President's. They were published posthumously, and at the time of his death, the White House Chief Usher had not completed writing the section on the Hoover White House. Therefore, the publisher assembled his notes, edited them somewhat, and then printed them.

Students might consider questions such as the following: what role did each man play in the decision leading up to the event, and how was their involvement and personal perspective likely to influence their account? How was each affected by the incident, and how might that have shaped their memories of the specifics? Which account is more sympathetic to Mrs. Hoover, and why? What factors might have biased their views both at the time, and as they later wrote down their memories for publication? How might the editor/publisher of Ike Hoover's memoirs have introduced mistakes, or changed the story?

Next, the students might develop two separate summaries of the incident as reported by each of the two men, and then compare and contrast the two summaries. According to each account, why did this situation arise (historical context)? What were the issues related to inviting Mrs. DePriest to tea, or to planning the event? When was she invited, and who were the other women at the same tea? Who made the decisions, or who was involved in making the decisions? What decisions did they make? What "facts" are reported differently by the two men, and where do their accounts agree? Why do you think the two descriptions differ?

Handout #1

White House Tea

Excerpt from President Herbert Hoover's memoirs:

"In giving the usual teas for Congressmen's wives, Mrs. Hoover insisted upon inviting [Mrs. DePriest] equally with the others. She was warned by some of her Congressional lady friends not to do it. The Negro Congressman [Oscar DePriest] did not particularly help matters by announcing to the press that his wife had received such an invitation. In consequence the southern press denounced this 'defiling' of the White House and the southern reporters lined up to watch the colored lady come and go, hoping to witness their prophecy that some Congressman's wife would flop out. Mrs. Hoover had more sense than to give any such occasion for affront to her guest or to the White House. Nor did she wish to offend ladies from the South. Therefore, she divided her Congressional tea into different days and placed the Negro lady on the first day with ladies previously tested to their feelings."

(Hoover, Herbert. *The Memoirs of Herbert Hoover: The Cabinet and Presidency.* New York: The Macmillan Co., 1952.)

Excerpt from Chief Usher Ike Hoover's memoirs:

"Mrs. Hoover had decided to invite all the Congressional ladies to a series of teas and the families of the different Senators and members of the House were allotted to four groups and invited accordingly. … The name of Mrs. DePriest was put aside for future consideration when these groups were made up. Everyone concerned realized that it was an unusual situation. Should Mrs. DePriest be included? The decision was postponed, for there was no precedent to go by. Thus the four parties to Congressional ladies came and went and Mrs. DePriest was invited to none of them.

In the meantime the discussion as to what to do continued. … Mrs. Hoover seemed to have an open mind and was willing to be guided by whatever course was mapped out for her. However, when it was at last decided in the affirmative, she seemed hesitant and began to figure out how it could be done. After much discussion pro and con, she decided to give an extra party for Mrs. DePriest. A few chosen guests would be informed in advance of the situation."

(Hoover, Irwin Hood. *Forty-Two Years in the White House.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1934.)

Teaching Activity #2: Tying the Topic to the NHD Theme

Again, teachers might begin by having their students read this article and the two memoirs excerpts (Handout #1). Then they can use the DePriest incident as the foundation for introducing students to this year's National History Day theme, *Taking a Stand in History.* Students could consider whether Mrs. Hoover or Mrs. DePriest (or both) "took a stand" in this situation. They might also examine the impact of these two women's actions. Teachers might have a class discussion of the following types of questions:

- Why did Mrs. Hoover decide to invite Mrs. DePriest to the White House? In the presidential election, Republican Herbert Hoover gained important electoral votes from the South, usually a Democratic stronghold. The DePriest Tea incident hurt him, politically, in the South. Discuss how a seemingly simple social event can blow up into a small crisis for a president. Knowing the potential fallout, were the Hoovers taking a stand when inviting Mrs. DePriest? Why or why not?

- What risks did Mrs. Hoover take by inviting Mrs. DePriest. What steps did she take to minimize those risks? What consequences did Mrs. Hoover face?

- Similarly, could you say that Mrs. DePriest took a stand when she accepted Mrs. Hoover's invitation? Did it take courage for her to accept the invitation? Would there have been pressure from the African-American community to accept or to decline the invitation? What potential costs or risks did she face?

- How did this incident affect Mrs. Hoover or Mrs. DePriest? How did it affect Hoover's presidency or his political support? Race relations? American politics? Can you identify any other results of the DePriest incident? (Students will need to conduct additional research to do more than raise these questions and speculate about the answers.)

Teachers might end this lesson by having students discuss, and then write a few paragraphs about, how their own National History Day topics connect to the theme of *Taking a Stand in History.*

The Red Room at the White House, as it looked during the Coolidge administration. White House Historical Association (White House Collection).

Teaching Activity #3: Searching for Hard-to-Find Information

Students will be likely to ask an obvious question when researching this topic: what about Mrs. DePriest? Unfortunately, she did not leave any written record that would reveal her thoughts, opinions, or feelings about the incident. In 2003, high school student Sarah Frese chose the DePriest incident as her National History Day topic. In her article on the next two pages, Ms. Frese describes her creative and persistent approach to finding whatever information she could.

Teachers might have students read Mr. Riley's article and Ms. Frese's companion piece, and then discuss her research method as it relates to their own NHD projects. Was Ms. Frese able to locate the kind of information she wanted? What seemed to work, and what did not work as well for her? More importantly, what are the gaps in their own projects? What questions would they like to answer but cannot seem to find relevant primary sources? Would they be able to try similar approaches with their projects? What other ideas does reading about Ms. Frese's experience give them? As follow up to the class discussion, teachers might ask students to write down their ideas in a "research plan" for their NHD projects.

How I Located the DePriest Family for My National History Day Project

Sarah Frese, Student, Marshalltown (Iowa) High School

An important part of a good National History Day project is approaching the topic from all angles and examining the viewpoints of everyone involved. For my 2003 NHD project about the DePriest Tea Incident, however, I found that a critical piece of the puzzle was missing: Mrs. DePriest's perspective was completely absent from both primary and secondary sources. Here is the story of how I became a detective and eventually found the missing piece.

The two key players in the incident were Mrs. Lou Hoover and Mrs. Jessie DePriest. It was easy to learn about Mrs. Hoover's impressions and thoughts in her own words, since her papers are open to researchers at the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library in West Branch, Iowa. Mrs. DePriest's opinions were much harder to find. A piece of the puzzle lost to history—or so it seemed. A good NHD project needs to have a balanced viewpoint, and mine could not have been balanced without Mrs. DePriest's voice. It was clear: I had to find it.

I went back to the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library again, and looked through Mrs. Hoover's clippings files to try to find any hint of where I might find Mrs. DePriest's point of view. While I read many things about how Congressman DePriest used this incident to further the cause of equality, Jessie's voice remained conspicuously absent.

I knew that the DePriests had lived in Chicago; maybe I could find their descendants still living there. So next, I looked up DePriest in the 2003 Chicago phonebook and found thirty-six DePriests listed. I sent each a letter describing my project, NHD, and why I needed their help.

After a week of waiting, I started to receive a variety of replies. I received a telephone call from a woman whose son had gone to college with Oscar DePriest III, Jessie's great-grandson. The caller said that her family was not related to Congressman DePriest by blood, but they had the same name because their ancestors had lived on the same plantation.

Then I received an amazing phone call from a Caucasian man named DePriest; he told me that his ancestors were the DePriests who had owned the plantation where Oscar DePriest's ancestors had been slaves. He explained that it had been common practice for slaves to take the name of the plantation owner like that. He said that this was his history and he was not proud of it, but it was what happened, and that we all need to know what happened in the past so that we do not repeat the mistakes in the future.

When I came home from basketball practice one evening, the blinking light on my answering machine signified a missed call; it also proved to be the turning point in my search for Jessie's opinions. The message was from a Mrs. Oscar DePriest, wife of a grandson of Congressman DePriest named Oscar DePriest II. She said that they were so excited to have received my letter and would love to help. Her husband was in hospice and could not speak to me, but she gave me the names of their two sons, Oscar III and Phillip, who were the executors of Jessie DePriest's estate.

After exchanging emails with Oscar DePriest III, I learned that all of Congressman DePriest's papers were in the estate. I had seen some photographs of the DePriests at the Herbert

Hoover Presidential Library on loan from the estate, and I asked for and received permission to use copies of some of those photographs in my NHD exhibit. I also helped connect the director of the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library with the DePriest family so the library could fill in some of the missing pieces to this story from the Hoover administration.

This was all nice, but I still had not found Mrs. DePriest's point of view in her own words. Philip DePriest consented to an interview over the telephone in which we talked about his great-grandmother. He described her as a strong person who knew what she wanted, and who believed that she deserved to be treated the same as any other person.

After the interview, he sent me a copy of a clipping that quoted Jessie DePriest, in her own words. I had finally found it! In the newspaper clipping, Mrs. DePriest spoke of the wonderful time that she had at the White House and how Mrs. Hoover was the perfect hostess. I can picture her walking into the White House asking herself what all of the ruckus was about since she was just another Congressman's wife invited to tea.

Through this experience I met some amazing people. I got to know about two women whose place in history was overlooked or forgotten, and make the story public once again. While displaying my NHD exhibit at the White House Visitors Center in June 2003, I shared the story with many more people. One group that particularly impressed me was an African-American family. I started talking with the father, but then he asked me to wait a minute. He ran around the building and gathered his family so that they could hear a major part of their history that had been forgotten. Telling the story of the DePriest Tea Incident to that family while they videotaped and asked questions was the highlight of my day. It showed me that all of my hard work had been worthwhile!

Sarah Frese is a senior at Marshalltown High School in Marshalltown, Iowa. She has participated in National History Day for the last five years, and has competed at the National Contest twice. Her project "The DePriest Tea Incident: …a Most Unusual Affair" was awarded sixth place at the 2004 National Contest. Sarah also enjoys playing soccer, throwing pottery on the wheel, and reading.

Sample Topics

The following list provides examples of topics related to this year's theme. The list is not inclusive; rather, it provides a starting point for teachers and students to brainstorm about ideas for National History Day entries. Students should keep in mind that many excellent research topics can be found by investigating their own local history. Choosing one of the topics below will not increase or decrease a student's chances of doing well at a National History Day contest.

People or Events

Lyndon B. Johnson's Stand for the Civil Rights Act of 1964

Queen Liliuokalani of Hawaii

Dalton Trumbo and the Hollywood Ten

John Carlos and Tommie Smith, 1968 Mexico City Olympics: Civil Disobedience While on the Medal Stand

Ernesto "Che" Guevara: The Fight to End Oppression in Latin America

George C. Marshall and his Plan: Taking a Stand for Relief in Western Europe

Prince Klemens von Metternich: Taking a Stand against the Enlightenment

Belva Ann Bennett Lockwood: Taking a Stand by Running for President

Disaster at Kent State, 1970: Protest Ends in Tragedy

Bartholomé de Las Casas: Standing Up to the Church for Human Rights in the Americas

Teddy Roosevelt and Muscular Christianity: Taking a Stand for Being a Man

Aisha Abdul-Rahman: Islamic Scholar and Feminist Philosopher

Taking a Stand for Women, Faith and Equality: Olympia Brown, Activist and First Female Minister

Omar Al-Mokhtar: Resisting the Italian Colonization of Libya

Standing and Singing for Equality: Marian Anderson's Concert in Washington, DC

John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor: Advocating Together for the Rights of Men and Women

Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Free Press, and the Fight to End Lynchings

Martin Luther: The Stand that Started the Reformation

Protecting the Environment: John Muir and the Ecology Movement

Malcolm X: Radicalism and Civil Rights

Mahatma Gandhi: Freedom Through Nonviolence

Defiance in Leaps and Bounds: Jesse Owens and the 1936 Berlin Olympics

Elvia Alvarado: Standing Up for the Poor of Honduras

A Last Stand: The Fall of Lt. Col. Custer and the Battle of Little Big Horn

Failing to Take a Stand Against Evil: Pope Pius XII and Hitler

Terrence Powderly and the Haymarket Square Riots: How Refusing to Take a Stand Led to the Downfall of the Knights of Labor

Ideas

A Stand for States' Rights? The Civil War and the Question of Secession

Vatican II: Taking a Stand for Religious Reform

The End of European Witch Hunts: Communities Take a Stand to Stop Hysteria

The Philadelphia Eleven: Taking a Stand for Women in the Episcopal Church

A Stand for All: The United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Standing on Our Own: Black Control of the Abolition Movement

Taking a Stand Against Foot-Binding: A Political and Cultural War in China

Taking a Stand against Taking a Drink: The Temperance Movement in Victorian America

The Egyptian Feminist Union: Taking a Stand for Women in Egypt

United We Stand—Or Do We? Cooperation Among New Left Organizations in America

Taking a Stand and Leading the Way: New Zealand Grants Women Suffrage, 1893

The War Hawks: Congressmen Take a Stand for the War of 1812

Strategies or Methods

Guy Fawkes and the Gunpowder Plot of 1605

Striking at the Lowell Mill: Standing Up for Themselves

From Slave Uprising to Sovereign Nation: Haiti's War for Independence

Many Ways to Take a Stand: Comparing the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference

Civil Disobedience and Non-Violence in American Politics, from the Quakers to the Hippies

Shay's Rebellion: Storming the Courthouse

Chinese, American, and European Resistance to the Japanese Occupation of Nanking in World War II

Remembering the Alamo: Few Stand Against Many

Taking a Stand in the Senate: History of the Filibuster

Loving v. Virginia, 1967: Interracial Couples Take a Stand for Equal Marriage Rights

The Anglo-Zulu War: Opposition to European Control in Africa

Taking a Stand on the Stand: History of the Fifth Amendment

Standing and Signing: History of Change Through Petitions

Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*: Writing Fiction to Take a Stand

Singing To Express a Stand: Bob Dylan and 1960s Protest Music

We Will Not Stand for This: History of Sit-Ins within the Labor and Civil Rights Movements

Griswold v. Connecticut, 1965: Standing Up For the Right to an Attorney

Operation Valkyrie: German Military Officers Taking a Stand against Hitler

Brown v. Board of Education, 1954: Standing Up For the Right to Equality in Education

Jews, Romans, and the Great Revolt of 66 CE: A Stand Gone Wrong

The Failed 1784 Peasant Uprising: Romanians Take a Stand for National Identity and Economic Prosperity

Never Was So Much Owed by So Many to So Few: The Royal Air Force and The Battle of Britain

Making Beautiful History Together!

The History Channel and National History Day Celebrate 11 Years

In 1994, the History Channel and National History Day partnered to improve history education across the country. Today, both organizations are at the top of their fields and continue to inspire both young and old to discover the past.

National History Day is grateful for the History Channel's generous support of the NHD program and history education. Together we are making a difference, keeping the future of the past in good hands.

To learn more about The History Channel programming and materials for educators go to **www.history.com/classroom**.

THE HISTORY CHANNEL®
WHERE THE PAST COMES ALIVE™

(clockwise from top) • Dan Davids, President of The History Channel–USA, recognizes student winner Katie Ferlisi from Greenville, S.C. • Logan and Nathan Skelley perform their award-winning project on the Scopes Monkey Trial. • Whitney Ebel and Kelli Schumacher discuss Native American education in an NHD performance. • Ted Nguyen, a student from Aldine, Texas, sets up a camcorder. Nguyen won the 2000 History Channel Award for Best Senior Individual Documentary. • Lawrence Cripe, a student at the Sycamore School in Indianapolis, Ind., discusses his exhibit with judges.